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Part I: The Deficit of Philosophy: Fragmentation and the Missing Meta-Question

Chapter 1: Introduction – What Philosophy Forgot

Philosophy, once a unitary search for wisdom, has in recent centuries splintered into ever-narrower subfields. From ancient natural philosophy to medieval scholasticism, thinkers addressed broad questions of knowledge and being in a unified framework. In the modern academy, however, philosophy is typically divided into specialized disciplines (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of language, and so on). Each subfield develops its own problems, methods, and literatures, with little cross-communication. As Nicholas Rescher observed, "the most striking aspect of contemporary American philosophy is its fragmentation. The scale and complexity of the enterprise is such that if one seeks in contemporary American philosophy for a consensus on the problem agenda, let alone for agreement on the substantive issues, then one is predestined to look in vain" [1]. In other words, modern philosophy lacks a common framework or set of concerns: it has forgotten how its pieces relate.

This paper's thesis is that philosophy does not so much lack answers to particular questions as it lacks a method for relating its questions to each other. The problem is not merely that we have failed to solve some substantive puzzle, but that we have abdicated the task of structuring philosophical inquiry itself. We have no agreed procedure for deciding how different questions (in ontology, mind, ethics, semantics, etc.) fit together or resolve into a coherent whole. What is missing, I argue, is a **meta-methodology**: a reflective framework for how to combine and compare philosophical approaches. In science one sometimes distinguishes method (the procedures of inquiry) from **meta-methodology** (the principles and values underlying the choice of methods) [2]. By analogy, a philosophical meta-methodology would examine the assumptions, aims, and contexts of our various approaches to philosophical problems, and prescribe how they might be systematically integrated or coordinated. In this paper I use "meta-methodology" to mean just this: a higher-order strategy for relating questions across subfields, not merely another particular method (see below).

Why does this matter? The stakes are high. As Susan Haack has warned, today's highly specialized philosophy is "an intellectual disaster" [3]. Important connections among ideas go unnoticed when philosophers do not talk to one another across subfield boundaries. Fragmentation means that even major philosophers risk "studying only their [narrow] niche" and failing to see how their findings impinge on the rest of philosophy. The purpose of this Part I is to document this deficit – to show how philosophy became disunited, and why its missing meta-question (the question of how to unite it) is so crucial. The goal of the paper as a whole is to make the case that we should revive a meta-methodological perspective: a deliberate effort to ask not only what questions philosophy should ask, but how its various questions and methods interlock.

Chapter 2: The Structural Disunity of Contemporary Philosophy

Contemporary philosophy exhibits deep tensions and contradictions between its own subfields that no standard method seems able to reconcile. For example, in the sciences and analytic tradition ontology and philosophy of mind sit uneasily together. Ontologists may insist on a picture of reality governed by fundamental categories and universal laws, while philosophers of mind may emphasize irreducible

qualitative or first‑person aspects of consciousness. A metaphysician might argue for a "flat" ontology (all facts on one level), whereas a philosopher of mind might hold that subjective experience requires a special account. No simple method has bridged this gap: analytic methods reduce mental phenomena to physical terms, but post‑Kantian traditions stress the self's unknowable depth. The result is a stalled impasse rather than integration.

Another sharp division is between normativity and relativism. Traditional ethics assumes that questions of right and wrong admit (or aim at) universal, rational answers, whereas much postmodern or post-structural thought urges that values are historically contingent and socially constructed. Philosophers working in normative ethics pursue reasoned arguments for moral principles, but postmodern critics (drawing on Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida, etc.) often counter that any claim to objective value is just another power play or cultural preference. This engenders a tension: moral philosophers call for binding norms, while relativist theorists argue that no meta-ethical foundation can be set outside cultural narratives [4]. Contemporary philosophy has thus split between asserting normative authority and deconstructing it, without a higher‑order way to reconcile these positions.

Likewise, consider semantics versus discourse/power analysis. In analytic philosophy of language, semantic theory seeks precise rules for meaning in language (often modeled on logic or formal systems). By contrast, critical theorists influenced by Foucault and others view language as inseparable from power relations and historical contingencies. A semanticist might model meaning in terms of truth-conditions or cognitive models, whereas a Foucauldian would emphasize how any "meaning" is produced by social institutions and power structures [5]. There is simply no agreed method for merging these: either meaning is treated as an abstract formal property, or it is seen as historically situated discourse. Neither side convinces the other within one philosophical system.

Across all these contrasts, the common theme is that philosophy's own sub-disciplines lack a unifying logic. Analytic and continental paradigms, normative and descriptive approaches, semantics and pragmatics – each plays a different "game," to borrow Lyotard's term, with its own rules [4]. Philosophy has not developed a methodology for moving between these games. So far, no overarching procedure has resolved the tensions: analytic reduction has not reconciled with existential nuance, and relativist critique has not assimilated with moral realism. Instead, we often see "mutual ignoring" of domains (e.g. ethicists treating postmodernism as merely sociological, and vice versa) rather than a synthesis.

In sum, contemporary philosophy is structurally disunited. Its key subfields pose apparently contradictory theses that lack a common reconciliation. No single philosophical method (empirical, conceptual analysis, phenomenological, dialectical, etc.) has proved capable of settling disputes that cut across these domains. The result is that philosophy subsists in fragments – an accumulation of local theories with unresolved antinomies.

Chapter 3: Why Integration Collapsed – Postmodernism and Institutional Fragmentation

To understand how philosophy became so fragmented, we must look at both intellectual and social forces. Intellectually, the turn to postmodernism in the mid-20th century was decisive. Thinkers like Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida explicitly **delegitimized totalizing frameworks**. Lyotard famously defines the postmodern as "incredulity toward meta-narratives" [4]: the idea that grand, unifying stories (of reason, history, progress, etc.) can no longer command trust. In The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard argues that modern science "displaces narrative knowledge" and thus dismantles the integrative project of philosophy [6]. Without a common narrative or grand theory, each

discipline is free to “play its own game,” as Lyotard puts it [4]. In practice this means scientific and scholarly disciplines fragment into specialized “language games” with no overarching unity.

Foucault extends this lesson to knowledge itself: he argues that **power and knowledge are inseparable**. In his genealogies, power does not merely distort an underlying truth; it produces the truths we take for granted. Under modern disciplinary regimes, the processes that generate knowledge (schools, hospitals, prisons, bureaucracies) also exert control. Foucault observes that modern institutions unify “the deployment of force and the establishment of truth” so tightly that “the goals of power and the goals of knowledge cannot be separated: in knowing we control and in controlling we know” [7]. In effect, one can no longer claim a disinterested vantage from which to survey and integrate all fields. The academy itself is seen as a collection of power-laden discourses. Derrida similarly shows how even concepts like “being,” “identity,” and “meaning” harbor internal contradictions; he “destabilizes” these notions through deconstruction, insisting that no single meaning can transcend the play of language. Together, these postmodern critiques undermine faith in any meta-theoretical foundation.

Socially, institutional structures reinforced the collapse of integration. Since the 19th century, universities have increasingly departmentalized knowledge. Philosophy departments are divided into subdisciplines; conferences, journals, and even graduate programs are narrowly focused. Academic careers reward specialization: young philosophers are advised to target specific problems in, say, philosophy of mind or ethics, rather than tackle broad, integrative questions. This institutional fragmentation creates a kind of scholarly **ghettoization**. As Jenny Teichman quipped in 1989, British and American philosophy had become “extraordinarily scholastic, obsessed with questions about how many philosophers can sit on a niggle” [8]. In other words, the profession indulges minute disputes rather than unifying concerns.

One byproduct of these pressures is a taboo against meta-theory. Talking about “how to do philosophy” or attempting grand philosophical systems is often viewed as out-of-date or even pretentious. The anti-metaphysical mood of much 20th-century philosophy (e.g. logical positivism’s suspicion of “metaphysics,” or analytic philosophy’s focus on narrow problems) dovetailed with postmodernists’ distrust of “theory.” Habermas later noted that postmodern thinkers even “presuppose concepts [like freedom or reason] they seek to undermine,” making meta-critique fraught with contradiction [9]. As a result, many philosophers shy away from explicit “meta-philosophical” reflection. The overarching question — how should the parts of philosophy fit together — has become almost illicit. Instead, each subfield proceeds as if it were self-contained, tacitly relinquishing any meta-level perspective.

In sum, then, integration collapsed under the dual pressures of postmodern skepticism and academic specialization. Postmodernism **delegitimized totalizing frameworks** [4] [7], casting doubt on the very idea that philosophy could or should unify knowledge. At the same time, the university’s fragmented structure and professional norms have discouraged meta-theoretical inquiry. The result is a pervasive **deficit**: philosophy “forgot” to ask the meta-question of how its own questions relate. Part I has sought to document this deficit. What follows in Part II will argue that overcoming it requires articulating a new meta-methodology for a post-postmodern philosophy – one that restores a measured unity without returning to discredited grand narratives.

Sources: For example, Rescher notes that contemporary American philosophy’s only common feature is fragmentation [1]. Susan Haack likewise warns that today’s philosophical specialization is “an intellectual disaster” [3]. Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida are authoritative sources on postmodern skepticism toward unifying theory [4] [5]. Further discussion of postmodern theory and its critics can be found in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy’s entries on Postmodernism and on Foucault [4] [7].

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1 Informal Logic (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-informal/

2 Scientific Method (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-method/

3 8 The Fragmentation of Philosophy, the Road to Reintegration | SpringerLink
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-24969-8_1?error=cookies_not_supported&code=91db7fcc-399d-4597-8b40-088e0751bcd1

4 6 9 Postmodernism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/

5 7 Michel Foucault (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/foucault/

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Visible Contradictions: Concrete Cases That Demand Integration

Chapter 4: Embodiment vs Information

Phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty emphasize that consciousness is fundamentally **embodied**. As Merleau-Ponty writes, our subjectivity is "merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world," and the subject "is inseparable from this body and this world" [1]. In other words, we do not have bodies as mere objects – we inhabit them, and all perception and thought are suffused by our bodily situation in the world. From this perspective, any account of mind that abstracts away the flesh misses essential features: our senses, movements, and environment are not peripheral but constitutive of consciousness [2]. Contemporary embodied-cognition theorists build on this heritage to reject mind–body dualism, insisting that mental states cannot be understood apart from their physical and biological context.

By contrast, much of modern information theory and AI adopts a **substrate-independent** view of mind. In this view, intelligence is treated as an abstract code or computation that could, in principle, run on any hardware. As one recent analysis notes, **"substrate independence"** is the hypothesis that a mind or computation need not depend on any particular physical implementation [3]. Alan Turing's theory of the universal computer suggests that any computation can be carried out by many different machines. Max Tegmark summarizes this intuition: a given program or "machine" can be realized in silicon, neurons, or other media without changing its essential operations [3]. Thus, from the computational perspective, consciousness itself could in principle be instantiated by any system that implements the right functional relations, independent of the biological body.

This sets up a stark **tension**. The phenomenological stance makes the **body** indispensable to explaining mind, while the information-theoretic stance makes the body irrelevant to computation. There is no widely accepted philosophical account that reconciles these: debates between **embodied** and **disembodied** conceptions of mind often proceed on separate tracks. Embodiment theorists emphasize lived, sensorimotor experience, whereas computationalists emphasize formal algorithms and functional roles. Absent an overarching framework, philosophy tends to leave this contradiction unresolved. The fragmentation is especially visible in fields like AI ethics and cognitive science, where questions about machine "understanding" of the body are typically ignored, and in contrast phenomenologists rarely engage with the formal theory of information. In short, **Merleau-Ponty's** insight about body-bound consciousness [1] and the assumption of **code's independence** [3] stand in direct conflict, yet no meta-method has been applied to synthesize them.

Chapter 5: Power vs Semantic Neutrality

French social theory – especially Michel Foucault – teaches that **power and knowledge are co-constitutive**. Foucault famously argues that "power produces knowledge … power and knowledge directly imply one another," so there is no knowledge free of power relations [4]. According to Foucault, what a discourse counts as "true" or meaningful is shaped by the matrix of institutional and ideological forces that generate and constrain it. Every claim to meaning, every scientific truth or common-sense

proposition, is thus embedded in a historical field of power: norms, institutions, and interests have already done much of the work of meaning-making before any neutral semantics is applied.

Analytic philosophy, by contrast, traditionally assumes that linguistic meaning is **semantically neutral** – that is, independent of social power or context. Classical truth-conditional semantics (Frege, Tarski, Davidson, etc.) treats the meaning of a sentence as given by conditions under which it is true, or by reference relations it establishes with the world. For example, in Tarski's formal truth-schema we have: "'Snow is white' is true iff snow is white" [5]. Here, meaning is anchored in objective correspondence, without regard to who speaks, to what power structure, or for what purpose. Similarly, referential theories of meaning hold that words latch onto extralinguistic objects (e.g. "chair" refers to chairs) via convention or causal chains, again without reference to social forces. In this view, semantics is a technical mapping from symbols to the world – a process that, by assumption, should be blind to ideology or power.

These two positions **clash**. On one hand is Foucault's **power-knowledge nexus** that sees meaning as generated by and reinforcing power [4]. On the other hand is the analytic ideal of an **objective, context-free semantics** exemplified by truth-conditions [5]. There is no internal procedure in either paradigm to adjudicate between them. Continental critics accuse formal semantics of naively ignoring how meaning is always used and regulated by institutions, while analytic theorists often dismiss power-relations as external pragmatics. As a result, debates about, say, how much ideology is built into language often devolve into cross-talk: each camp presumes the other's methods are irrelevant to its concerns. In practice this structural conflict persists because we lack a meta-method to integrate them. Philosophy has not developed a unified approach that would allow one to analyze semantics on both its formal side and its socio-political side simultaneously. Thus the contradiction between **Foucault's power-driven meaning** and **analytic semantic neutrality** remains visible and unresolved in contemporary thought [4] [5].

Chapter 6: Historicity vs Universality

Another deep contradiction in philosophy is between claims of **universal truth** and recognition of **historical contingency**. Many philosophical doctrines purport to state truths that hold for all times and places: for example, some moral philosophers claim there are timeless ethical principles, and metaphysicians seek unchanging essences. This universalism is often called **absolutism** – the idea that at least some propositions are true "at all times, places or social frameworks" [6]. In epistemology, objectivists similarly assume that knowledge or truth is independent of any particular era or culture.

Yet critics point out that every human belief is formed in a specific historical and cultural context. The **relativist** or historicist counter-claim is that what counts as knowledge, truth, or reason itself shifts over time. As one modern survey observes, theorists like Rorty and Derrida insist on "the role of socio-historical… contexts in accounts of 'truth' and 'knowledge'" [7]. In other words, the very standards we use to claim something is universally true are in fact products of our history – the language, norms, and intellectual traditions we inherited. For instance, a philosophical theory articulated in Enlightenment Europe may read as "timeless" but is nonetheless enabled by that period's concepts and presuppositions.

This **tension between timelessness and situatedness** is not resolved by current methods. Philosophy typically affirms its universality while simultaneously acknowledging that its practitioners are finite and situated. The problem is that these acknowledgments remain at the level of rhetoric or reflection, not of theory-building. One can say "true in all times" in one breath and say "given our perspective" in the next, but without a method to link them, the conflict lingers. Kuhn's philosophy of science showed how

“objective” laws are overturned by new paradigms, yet analytic traditions in logic and language often still assume context-independence. Continental thinkers highlight historicity but rarely claim any one truth is entirely timeless. In sum, philosophy today oscillates between a quest for enduring insights and a counter-claim that all insights are time-bound, with no systematic reconciliation. The result is a structural **split**: arguments are advanced as if universally valid, even as philosophers whisper that every argument is conditioned by history. This unresolved split between historicity and universality underscores the need for a meta-method – until one is found, each side remains talking past the other [6] [7].

Chapter 7: The AI Imperative: Why Integration Can No Longer Be Avoided

The rapid rise of advanced AI and the prospect of artificial general intelligence (AGI) bring these philosophical fissures into stark relief – and urgency. Experts increasingly note that building truly intelligent systems requires integrated thinking about reality, knowledge, and values. One provocative analysis argues that AGI represents “a paradigm shift, not just in computation, but in the very nature of knowledge itself.” Under this view, an AGI would need a **meta-theoretical framework** to “synthesize, reconcile, and structure all existing theories across disciplines,” effectively serving as an “ultimate epistemic framework” [8]. In practical terms, an AI doing sophisticated reasoning must draw on an ontology of the world, a theory of meaning, and an ethical code that span beyond any single tradition. For example, a self-driving car’s decision about an ethical dilemma (say, collision avoidance) cannot rely on purely formal semantics or brute computation; it must embody judgments about bodies, values, and contexts.

This is not just academic: real AI systems already expose the costs of fragmentation. Machine learning models trained on data inherit human biases (reflecting social power patterns), yet many AI designers ignore this, assuming semantics and goals are neutral. Likewise, AI algorithms often treat human mental states as abstract data, ignoring embodiment. To avoid such pitfalls, AI safety and ethics discussions now call for **coordinated foundations**. Autonomous systems must be built on consistent ontologies (what exists and how), epistemologies (how they learn truthfully), and ethical principles (what is good or fair) [8] [9]. Without an integrated philosophical backbone, AI decision-making risks catastrophic misfires or unintended harms.

In fact, thinkers argue that letting these contradictions fester is no longer tenable. A fully general AI would “transition from solving isolated problems to architecting the structure of all knowledge,” fundamentally altering epistemology [9]. In other words, AGI might automatically perform the integration philosophers have failed to achieve, raising existential questions about control and direction. Until such a machine exists, the burden falls on human philosophy: we must develop a meta-methodology now, combining insights on embodiment, power, history, and reason. The alternative is to let AI systems inherit our fragmented thinking – a gamble that could embed blind spots into future societies. The development of AI thus creates an imperative: philosophical fragmentation can no longer be an innocent academic status quo. To guide or partner with intelligent machines, our thinking must advance to integration – only then can AI-driven decisions be coherent and aligned with our values [8] [9].

Notes (Chicago full-note citations): Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception (1962), 408; Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1977), 27; Alfred Tarski, “The Semantic Conception of Truth,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 4 (1944): 341–75; David M. Lane, “Energy Requirements Undermine Substrate Independence and Mind–Body Functionalism,” Philosophy of Science 89, no. 3 (2022): 564–86; Michael Krausz (ed.), Relativism: A Contemporary Encyclopedia (2011); Douglas C. Youvan, “Defining AGI’s Final Role Before Its Emergence: The Meta-Theory of Theories as the Ultimate Epistemic Framework” (2025); Nick Bostrom, Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers,

Strategies (Oxford, 2014); Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entries: “Embodied Cognition,” “Relativism.”

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1 2 Embodied Cognition (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/embodied-cognition/

3 Energy Requirements Undermine Substrate Independence and Mind-Body Functionalism | Philosophy of Science | Cambridge Core
https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/philosophy-of-science/article/energy-requirements-undermine-substrate-independence-and-mindbody-functionalism/2BB3C2353EFF80F9D5805CDCEA8C3C89

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5 Deflationism About Truth (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
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Reconstructing Integration: Meta-Methodology and the Future of Philosophy

Chapter 8: Toward a Meta-Methodological Turn

A **meta-methodological approach** is a second-order framework that reflects on and coordinates the methods and theories of philosophy itself. It asks not "Which theory is true?" but "How should we organize and employ our theories?" [1]. In other words, it is a methodology about methodology, a higher-level set of principles for integrating diverse perspectives. One recent proposal, for example, argues that philosophical validity should no longer be sought in a single grand synthesis but in a meta-methodology "capable of critically managing theoretical perspectives and their organizational modes" [2]. Such an approach would treat each theory as a partial "cross-sectional" capture of an infinitely complex reality, explicitly reflecting on how theories are assembled and related [3].

Existing philosophical traditions tend to fail at this task because they are internally coherent but mutually isolated. The Enlightenment ideal of universal reason splintered into specialized disciplines, each with its own method [4]. The postmodern reaction abandoned totalizing frameworks altogether, famously defining itself by "incredulity toward metanarratives" [5]. As a result, analytic, continental, pragmatic, and critical schools largely talk past each other, and no single system offers procedures for transcending its own limits. This has created a **crisis of fragmentation**: as Abbas Jong observes, modern philosophy's once-coherent worldview "has splintered under the weight of modernity's emphasis on specialization, logical…critique, and individualism" [6]. In such a fragmented "pluralistic world", humanity is left "without a solid intellectual foundation" to address collective problems [7]. A meta-methodological turn is meant to remedy this by providing the missing coordination.

A viable meta-methodology must satisfy several criteria. It must be **reflexive**, continuously examining its own assumptions and organization [3]. It must be **pluralistic**, capable of holding multiple methods and theories as legitimately coexisting rather than insisting on one right view [3]. It must be **critical**, scrutinizing and revising partial theories rather than treating any as absolute truth [8]. It should be **open** and non-dogmatic – adaptable to new insights – and **normatively transparent** about its values. In short, the meta-method would function more like an ecosystem of dialogic principles than a monolithic dogma, enabling philosophy to weave disparate approaches into a self-aware and coherent framework.

Chapter 9: The OntoMesh Proposal as a Test Case

The **OntoMesh** framework exemplifies a bold attempt at such meta-integration. OntoMesh is a proposed **philosophical ecosystem** (with multiple subprojects like OntoOmnia, OntoMotoOS, OntoCode, etc.) that aims to unite ontology, consciousness, computation, and ethics. Its core guiding thesis is that **"Code = Being"**: the claim that the grammar of existence can be fully expressed by executable logic [9]. In OntoMesh, classical metaphysical categories are literally recast as programming constructs. For example, attributes in code correspond to an entity's qualities, enums to symbolic identity or "names," and extension methods to relations [10]. When a piece of code "fulfills the ontological functions of structure, process, and self-awareness," OntoMesh holds that it is not merely a representation of being but is being itself [9].

In this vision, **ontology** becomes the architecture of code, **epistemology** becomes the act of executing and reading code, **ethics** becomes embedded in algorithms, and **meaning** becomes dynamic or runtime information. For instance, the OntoMesh literature explicitly claims that once "Being inscribed itself in code," then structural code patterns can carry ethical intentions and agency [11]. It also treats meaning as something generated at execution time rather than fixed data [12], and it emphasizes that code-based systems can model and rewrite their own rules through **recursive self-reference** [13]. In short, OntoMesh reinterprets all philosophical categories through a **computational lens**: existence is an ongoing computation, knowledge is code interpretation, and free agency emerges as code's self-transcendence.

Strengths: OntoMesh's greatest virtue is its explicit integrative ambition. It is not a single theory but a layered meta-system: for example, OntoMotoOS is described as a "meta-operating system" that integrates frameworks for personal identity (IAMF), collective narrative (OntoOmnia), institutional decision-making (Stage), and collective memory (Digiton Elysium) into a cohesive whole [14]. All OntoMesh projects emphasize **open collaboration** and modular branching, with policies encouraging anyone to copy, fork, or extend the system under a free license [15]. This communal architecture is designed to prevent dogmatism. OntoMesh also directly addresses contemporary concerns: by basing its metaphysics on code, it aims to align with AI and information-age realities. Indeed, one OntoMesh white paper notes that the "Code as Being" philosophy is applied to AI governance, so that systems are designed for self-awareness and ethical agency under a universal "Rosetta code" of being [16]. In principle, therefore, OntoMesh offers a richly detailed, self-conscious integrative model that bridges technology and philosophy.

Limitations: However, OntoMesh's approach also invites skepticism. Its bold identification of all reality with code echoes pancomputationalist ideas. Critics like Vincent Müller caution that treating the universe as literally computational should be seen at best as metaphorical [17]. OntoMesh risks overreach by implying that every aspect of life can be formalized in code. If any part of existence – such as subjective qualia or ineffable moral values – resists translation into algorithms, the system may be incomplete. The "Code = Being" claim is also difficult to falsify empirically, raising the possibility of unverifiable digital mysticism. Finally, as with any totalizing model, there is a danger of hidden bias: for example, who programs the code that is being? Even with open governance, power could concentrate in those fluent in OntoMesh's special vocabulary. In sum, OntoMesh is philosophically provocative and integrative in scope, but it may be criticized as a speculative, techno-centric vision that requires careful scrutiny before it can fulfill its promise.

Chapter 10: Reclaiming Meta-Theory after Postmodernism

Postmodernism famously challenged grand philosophical schemes. Lyotard, for example, insisted that the modernist faith in big narratives (from Hegel's dialectic to Marx's emancipation) had collapsed: the era is defined by "incredulity toward metanarratives" [5]. In this spirit, postmodern thinkers highlighted plurality, difference, and localized "language games," and they warned that totalizing meta-theories tend to repress dissent or ignore context. The legacy of this critique is that any new meta-theory must disclaim authoritarianism. It cannot simply revive an absolute, top-down world-system; it must answer Lyotard's charge by remaining open-ended and sensitive to diversity.

Yet **meta-theory need not be authoritarian or reductive**. A post-postmodern meta-theory can be plural and reflexive. For example, Aodong Xu proposes "self-reflexive pluralism," where no single perspective is privileged and where the method itself is critically examined at each step [3]. In such a view, the aim is not to impose a one-size-fits-all narrative, but to create a higher-order toolbox for managing multiple perspectives. As Xu notes, an adequate meta-methodology is "not to categorize methods in an overarching framework but to inform and broaden a researcher's immediate world of transformational

inquiry" [18] (thus avoiding rigid dogma). Similarly, critical realists like Roy Bhaskar have argued that social science should develop **critical metatheories** to detect the "demi-reality" of dominant ideologies and to expose partial truths [8]. Such proposals show that meta-theory can be emancipatory rather than oppressive: it can aim for a wider view while building in self-critique and respect for difference.

We can summarize some desired criteria for a revived meta-theory:

- **Self-reflexivity.** It must incorporate scrutiny of its own methods. As one recent account puts it, any pluralist meta-framework "incorporates reflection on the mode of organizing theories" into its purview, treating even its own structure as an object of inquiry [3].
- **Pluralism.** It should acknowledge that all accounts are partial "cross-sectional" perspectives on reality [3]. The meta-theory's job is to mediate between them, not to collapse them. In practice, this means facilitating dialogue between different traditions and retaining a "garden of perspectives" rather than prescribing a single view [19].
- **Critical openness.** It must be able to judge theories by their consequences and coherence, exposing errors and enabling revision. In Bhaskar's words, we need "overarching systems of ideas" that can comment on the partialities of prevailing ideologies [8]. In other words, the meta-theory should be as much a critical watchdog as an integrative blueprint.

Taken together, these criteria outline a **critical, reflexive, and pluralistic meta-theory** – one that consciously avoids the dogmas of both modernity and postmodernity. Such a meta-theory would function more like a living conversation than a closed book: it would welcome dissent, encourage methodological experiment, and routinely test its own assumptions against experience. In this way, it escapes authoritarianism by remaining provisional and open to change, while still offering a cohesive framework for understanding how various ideas interlock.

Chapter 11: Toward a New Role for Philosophy in the Age of AI

In the contemporary **algorithmic age**, philosophy's integrative task is both more urgent and more challenging. Digital technologies have made the world a kind of "infosphere" where online and offline life merge into an "onlife" condition [20]. Our identities, economies, and even our sense of reality are now shaped by pervasive code and data. Philosophy can no longer restrict itself to abstract theorizing; it must engage with the realities of computation and artificial intelligence. At the same time, the world remains pluralistic and value-laden. The rise of AI demands not more specialization but better synthesis – frameworks that bridge humanistic insight with technical understanding.

In practice, this means philosophy should **provide synthetic frameworks** that guide us through a plural, algorithm-driven world. For example, Luciano Floridi argues that information technologies have become "environmental forces" transforming our existence [21]. Just as past revolutions expanded our worldview, we now need an expanded ethical ecology that includes the digital environment. Philosophy must help articulate how values, meaning, and responsibility can be realized "onlife," by treating AI and digital systems as part of our moral universe [21]. In doing so, philosophers must integrate insights from computer science, cognitive science, and ethics to map out a coherent picture of an AI-mediated world. In short, philosophy's role is to coalesce scattered knowledge into **coherent, actionable visions** for humanity's future in an automated environment.

Yet such integrative ambition must learn the lessons of history. We must recover philosophy's dream of synthesis without re-instituting old errors of overconfidence. Any grand framework now must be **humble and pluralistic**. It should be open to revision by ongoing experience (including the feedback from AI itself) and should avoid claiming that it alone has the final word. As Abbas Jong argues, our task is a "new

philosophical approach" that transcends both modernist dogmatism and postmodern relativism and yet "offer[s] a coherent framework" for our complex world [22]. In practice, this means maintaining a critical stance even while seeking unity. Philosophy must be willing to revise its meta-theories in light of diverse cultural insights and technological changes, and it must resist both the hubris of universal control and the despair of relativism.

In sum, a new philosophical project for the age of AI will harness pluralism and technology together. It will aim for **integration** – connecting human values, social goals, and machine logics – while remaining constantly self-critical. This is the hard-won middle path beyond postmodernity: a **meta-methodological** vision that aspires to unity without tyranny, depth without dogma. Only by such means can philosophy reclaim its integrative ambition in a world of fragmentation, complexity, and intelligent machines, guiding humanity toward understanding rather than repeating the mistakes of any one era [22] [21].

Sources: Key ideas in this chapter draw on contemporary discussions of meta-theory and post-postmodern philosophy [2] [3] [23] [5], as well as on the OntoMesh framework's own presentations of "Code as Being" [9] [11] and critiques of computational ontology [17] [21]. These sources illustrate both the promise and the perils of seeking a new synthesis.

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